

I

The Balts: Is there a difference between spirituality and religion? Can a person be religious without having spirituality and vice-versa? Bishop: Interesting question. It depends on your definitions for both terms. A lot of modern folk see 'religion' as being a kind of hide-bound acceptance of questionable teachings and doctrines while 'spirituality' is a 'purer' worship not bound by the traditions of the Church. Two things:

1. Both involve fallible human-beings who are quite capable of rationalising any nonsense just so long as they are not challenged by it.
2. The ancient Church saw no such distinctions. James, the brother of our Lord said: *"A religion that is pure and stainless according to God the Father is this: to take care of orphans and widows who are suffering, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."* (James 1:27)

So, I see them as inseparably joined.

II

The Balts: What is the Church's view on life after death, i.e. heaven and hell? Bishop: In the end this truly is unknowable. We can guesstimate but that is all. Several things are, however, unlikely. Sitting on clouds playing harps; a God who is so personally insecure that they need to be constantly praised; The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) defines heaven as: *"This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed - is called "heaven." Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness..."*¹

We are constrained by scripture, by tradition and by the teachings of the Church to accept that such a place as Hell exists. However, there is nowhere in scripture which constrains us to believe it to be beyond the love and mercy of God.

¹ https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P2M.HTM

III

The Balts: Extra terrestrial sightings more noticed—if speculated that we are not the only civilisation, how would that affect our religious beliefs? Bishop: It wouldn't. They would simply be others loved by God and our fellows in creation.

IV

The Balts: Where do we stand with regard to the apocryphal books? Do they have a place in our religious studies? Bishop: We join with our Anglican Brothers and Sisters in affirming that: "The Apocrypha is well worth reading in the church today, but that there is a difference between apocryphal writings and canonical Holy Scripture. Theologically, we don't believe or teach anything from the Apocrypha that isn't also affirmed by the Old and New Testaments..."²

V

The Balts: Hindu Scriptures, i.e. Gita & Vedas are the oldest religious text in the world—also Zoroaster religion—how did they originate? Their writers guided by Angels? Bishop: Gathic Zoroastrianism (i.e. that faith based solely on the Gathas) and Ancient Hinduism are around the same age with Zoroaster probably having lived around 1200 BCE. God has spoken to all people, how could God not? I do not believe these folk were guided by Angels but rather by the Ruach Ha-kodesh, the Life-giving Spirit of God.

VI

The Balts: How do we view Eastern religions, Confucianism ect? Bishop: Refer to the answer in question V.

VII

The Balts: Define religion?

Bishop: Refer to the answer in question I.

Mr & Mrs Ian Balt · Bp Raymond McIntyre · 19 May 2021

² <https://anglicancompass.com/the-apocrypha-what-is-it-why-do-anglicans-read-it/>